



Maine Forest Service Consultants Newsletter & Ice Storm Update #12 December 2000



CHANGES IN MAINE FOREST SERVICE COST-SHARE ADMINISTRATION POLICIES

By now, you have all received a letter from Donald Mansius outlining changes to the way the Maine Forest Service administers its cost-share programs. These changes were not arrived at arbitrarily, but came about as the result of problems we found when doing random spot checks of Stewardship Incentive Program practices and from calls from landowners who were confused about programs and paperwork.

The majority of the problems center around two issues: 1) Consultants who had signed off on Stewardship Incentive Program practices as completed, but which were not and 2) Falsification of bills; particularly marking a bill as "paid" when it had not been paid. Our investigations indicate that the problems are more widespread than we initially thought.

I do recall telling all consultants who attended the ice storm training sessions of the probability of a comprehensive audit of ice storm fund expenditures by the federal government, due to the size of the overall grant for ice storm mitigation. Further, consultants were cautioned at that time that their records could be subject to this audit and that all paperwork should be completed carefully and completely.

It is unfortunate that all consultants participating in Maine Forest Service cost-share programs must now comply with these new rules as a result of the actions of a few. However, the Maine Forest Service has a responsibility to institute adequate safeguards to ensure the wise use of the people's money and to uphold the integrity of its landowner assistance programs.

If you have any questions about these new policies, please contact me at (207) 287-1073.

-- Kathy Nitschke

COST-SHARE ASSISTANCE FOR FOREST MANAGEMENT PLANS GOING ON HIATUS

Due to the tremendous workload generated by the ice storm cost-share programs (processing of applications and payments, federal reports, field inspections, review of plans, audits, etc.), the Maine Forest Service has decided to put the Forest Stewardship Assistance Program (cost-sharing for forest management plans) on hold until July 1, 2001.

This will give the Maine Forest Service time to finalize the ice storm program and to make needed changes to the Forest Stewardship Assistance program rules and policies and database.

Any applications received on or before December 31, 2000 will be processed and approved at the current 75% rate. Applications received after that date will be returned to the landowner with a letter explaining the delay. We will keep a list of deferred applicants and send them new application forms when the program restarts.

DEADLINES, DEADLINES, DEADLINES!!

*ALL (repeat, **ALL**) cost-share programs and practices approved under the ice storm funding (Forest Stewardship Assistance, Stewardship Incentive Program, and Rural Development Through Forestry) **MUST** (repeat, **MUST**) be completed by April 1, 2001.*

This means all work done, all plans written to standards, all papers submitted to MFS district foresters by that date. Claims for Payment and requests for reimbursement received after April 1, 2001 will be denied.

Any requests for the ice storm aerial photography obtainable through the James W. Sewall Company at the reduced rate of \$2.50 must be received by Sewall by April 1, 2001. The photos may be purchased at the Sewall Company's regular rate after that date.

COMMON QUESTIONS ABOUT THE NEW COST-SHARE PROGRAM POLICIES

Does the new policy apply to all Maine Forest Service cost-share programs?

YES, ALL PROGRAMS, including Forest Stewardship Assistance, the Stewardship Incentive Program, and the Rural Development Through Forestry Program.

I received a deposit from a client ages ago. Do I still need a copy of the check?

*NO, but you do need proof of payment. You need to submit to the Maine Forest Service district forester in your area a **notarized** statement that you received the payment from the landowner. This statement must include your name, address, and forester's license number, the landowner's name and address, the amount of the payment, when it was made, and what it was made for.*

The landowner paid me in cash. What do I need for proof of payment?

*YOU need to submit the same type of **notarized** statement as described above. Be sure to include all pertinent information, or the statement will be returned to you and the reimbursement to the landowner will be delayed.*

ATLANTIC SALMON LISTED IN 8 RIVERS

The US Fish and Wildlife Service and the National Marine Fisheries Service announced in November that Atlantic salmon were declared an endangered species under the federal Endangered Species Act. The listing applies only to salmon in the Sheepscot River, Ducktrap River, and Cove Brook in the Midcoast, and the Narraguagus, Pleasant, Machias, East Machias, and Dennys Rivers downeast. The listing takes effect on December 18.

Impacts of the listing to forestry operations are still unclear, but Maine Forest Service will be engaging in conversations to attempt to clarify what how the list could affect timber harvesting, particularly on small and/or private woodlots in these watersheds.

More information on the listing is available at the federal website: endangered.fws.gov/i/e51.html, and the salmon watershed council website: www.mainesalmonrivers.org/esa.html.

Contact: Morten Moesswilde, 287-8430

INTERNET NEWS

CLP ON THE 'NET

The Certified Logging Professional program has an interesting and informative web site you should check out at www.moosehead.net/clp. There's information there on upcoming classes, scholarships, and the program in general, as well as a database of CLPs. You can also phone them at (207) 668-2841 or email them at clp@moosehead.net.

NATURESERVE

This site is a source for authoritative conservation information on more than 50,000 plants, animals, and ecological communities of the United States and Canada. It provides in-depth information on rare and endangered species, but includes common plants and animals, too. It is a product of the Association for Biodiversity Information in collaboration with the Natural Heritage Network. The USDA Forest Service is a supporter and fund source for this site. You can find it at www.natureserve.org.

OTHER BIODIVERSITY WEBSITES

plants.usda.gov - This website has an abundance of information on plants including plant fact sheets, links to other plant sites, global plant checklist, state plant checklists accessible by clicking on states from a United States map, USDA Forest Service plant lists, and flora of North America with taxonomic keys and sketches of plants.

plantfacts.ohio-state.edu - Another plant website that features plant fact sheets from university extension offices throughout the United States.

MAINE FOREST SERVICE WEBSITE UPDATED

A number of changes have been made to the Maine Forest Service website. We now have a calendar of events pertaining to forestry activities and a number of publications are available for downloading. New publications on-line include revised information sheets (boundaries, pruning, weeding & thinning, workers' compensation) and the Report of the 1999 Annual Inventory of Maine's Forests. The web site is:

www.state.me.us/doc/mfs/mfshome.htm

INCREMENT BORING -- IS THE INFORMATION WORTH THE DAMAGE?

An increment borer is an instrument often used indiscriminately by foresters, resulting in degrade by creating holes and pitch formation in pine and stain and decay in hardwoods.

In pruning pine, the goal should be to produce a maximum amount of C Select lumber. C Select lumber commands a premium price over D Select. Assuming that the tree being bored is about 15 inches DBH and that it will be allowed to grow to a harvest size of 20 to 22 inches, the borer potentially can damage about four 12-inch boards 16 feet long.

Under NELMA grading rules, holes are not allowed in C Select but are allowed in D Select under a cutting rule that allows for cutting out a 4-inch defect in a limited number of pieces. The pitch streak further complicates the grading. Given the scarcity of wide and long select boards, the ultimate loss at the final point of sale is substantial.

In hardwoods, degrade problems are even more serious than in pine. Holes are not allowed in clear face cuttings under the National Hardwood Lumber Association grade rules. Although it is possible that an increment borer hole would not degrade a piece of First and Second (FAS), it is more probable that it would in some way upset the pattern of cuttings to determine the grade.

Additional value loss results from the occurrence of fungal stains around the hole in some species. These can markedly affect the defect area if they remain isolated, but may serve as a source of decay that will affect a substantial portion of the log. It has been reported that after only a few years, boring nearly always resulted in discolorations several feet in length in diffuse porous hardwoods. Furthermore, all hardwoods examined developed localized decay at some of the holes.

Non-destructive growth rate and age determination are real problems for the forester. Some company policies on southern pine call for stump boring, which is fine for smaller trees and really gives a more accurate age determination than boring at breast height. There is, of course, still the danger of infection by decay organisms. Because of stump irregularities, determination of growth rates from borings at the stump level is difficult. An alternative is working from inference from unpruned trees in the stand, recognizing that these were probably not as well formed and vigorous at the time of pruning as those that were pruned.

From the standpoint of the mill that purchases pruned logs, the product is a bit of a pig in a poke. What the sawmill wants are logs that were pruned properly at a fairly uniform diameter, the diameter being specified.

With this information, the mill can get a reasonably good estimate of yield of Select lumber and price the logs accordingly.

There is a real necessity for a recording system that can become a permanent land record and can be transferred with the ownership so the true benefits of pruning can be realized by both the landowner and the sawmill. The forestry profession, if it is to continue to advise landowners to invest in pruning, should come up with a system that will establish a procedure that an owner can use to assure that a record of pruning and the details of method, size of tree, number of trees, and other pertinent data is established and available 25 to 30 years later through some repository.

Until a system is developed, anyone currently pruning stands should develop careful records of the operation, and keep them attached to the deed of the property where his or her heirs will be certain to find them. Certification by a Licensed Professional Forester would be highly desirable. In the meantime, foresters, please think twice before you bore that tree. Is the information you are getting worth the damage you are inflicting on it?

Adapted from an article in
The Northern Logger & Timber Processor, March 1990
by Dick Hale and Bill Ostrofsky,
University of Maine

THE LAMMERT REPORT

When the bottom started falling out of the home building market in late May or early June, those of you who had "don't cut it if the market declines" clauses in your logging contracts which were invoked, will probably see the dimension lumber market getting back on it's feet now that the presidential situation will have a chance to calm down. Just before the dimension mills threw in the towel for commodity lumber this summer, logs coming into the mill yard cost more per thousand than the lumber was selling for. Some mills inventoried logs and laid off employees, while other mills just stopped buying and started vacations. Several mills started capitol improvements early so that the new equipment will be in and running when markets improve.

The hardwood mills have been tight for logs all summer what with the massive thirst for tree length by the pulp mills. Some hardwood mills have started sawing shorter logs (6') which reminds me that Maine had over 100 bolter mills going 25 years ago. Many are still running, surviving on 8' wood that they slash to 50".

I've located 20 plus thin kerf portable band mills thru their ads in Uncle Henry's this fall. Sooner or later a group of loggers is going to get together and either get on of these that they may tow around to each other's landings or garages and saw out some pretty nice wood that may otherwise go for pulp. Several of these mill owners are chewing on my ear about the possibility of a co-op of sawmills that can produce a volume suitable at least for the internet markets.

I urge you to watch out for changing prices on all of the higher valued log grades. The veneer market is jumping around with what are sometimes "monthly adjustments" of between \$25 to \$100. You should be able to sell any oak, ash, maple, or birch with 3 or more clear faces and a 14" top for a good grade of veneer.

If you have a slasher making your logs, weld a 14" diameter section of pipe an inch or so wide on one of the arms facing the office. He can then compare the top end of the log just cut with the size needed to be in the real money wood. Painted circles are O K but the paint is soon worn off. Please slow down and maximize the potential of every stem. If it has even a 6' log in it, then it should come out. If you can't get an operator to do this then maybe it's time for you to climb up and start to make money.

May the coming year bring steadier markets with some honest returns.

-- Pete Lammert

NEW SOFTWARE AVAILABLE

Neil Lamson, a silviculturist with USDA Forest Service, Northeastern Area, and Brooks Mills, a member SWOAM have developed a software program called BANTIC (Brooks and Neil Tree Investment Chart). The program helps landowners estimate the potential value of trees in their woodlot by using a Microsoft Excel spreadsheet to compute the volume, value, and annual rate of return of standing trees. The user enters current log prices and grade (2, 3, and 4 clear faces). The spreadsheet automatically computes volume, value, and annual rate of return for trees from 10 to 30 inches diameter breast height having logs with 2, 3, and 4 clear faces. The user can create a separate spreadsheet for any number of species by using the COPY SHEET feature in Excel.

The software has two important applications: determining financial maturity and evaluating cultural treatments. Brooks Mills says "The rate of return calculations can be used to determine when to cut trees that are financially mature. The user simply compares

the rate of return found in BANTIC to an alternative rate of return. Those trees that are making less than the alternative rate of return are financially eligible to be cut."

BANTIC is also used to evaluate cultural treatments. Suppose removing low value trees from a sawlog-sized hardwood stand would increase the tree growth rate from 2 inches in 10 years to 2 inches in 5 years. Contrast this situation to an untreated stand. The 10-year value increase of 16 inches trees to 18 inch trees would be greater in the treated stand compared to the untreated stand. BANTIC would indicate the potential increase in value, allowing the landowner to determine if the cost of treatment will produce a profit. In summary, BANTIC applies values to individual trees, projects future values, and calculates rates of return based on measurements of the growth rates of these trees.

BANTIC requires annual diameter measurements of trees over at least two growing seasons to record growth rates.

For a copy of the software, contact Roger Monthey at the USDA Forest Service in Durham, NH at (603) 868-7699 or the SWOAM office toll free at 1-877-467-9626.

NEW PUBLICATION FROM DEP

The Maine DEP has published a new edition of "A Field Guide to Laws Pertaining to Timber Harvesting in Organized Areas of Maine." This update includes information on the Protection & Improvement of Waters Law, The Erosion & Sedimentation Control Law, The Natural Resource Protection Act (NRPA) and its associated rules; the Shoreland Zoning Act (SZA) and corresponding local ordinances; and the Forest Practices Act and its associated rules. Contact the Maine Forest Service in Augusta at (207) 287-2791 for a copy.